



A House-Warming Thanksgiving Dinner

[By Charles H. Robinson.]

It was all on account of the Widow Ames.

During the lifetime of her lord and master Mrs. Ames was nothing but an atom flurrying around on the edge of the social whirlwind, but, as a widow with a tidy bit of money left her by the lamented departed—that was another matter. Then, the storm center sought to draw her in and squeeze the money out of her. Being a wise woman, she resisted the pressure and invested her windfall in a little cottage, which possessed three rooms below and two more in the attic. This,

clay, which drew their prey down into the depths without hope of extrication. Naturally careless and reckless, Mr. Jimson plunged into a quagmire, and when he felt himself sinking, he shouted for help. Fortunately the widow heard his cries and rushed to the rescue.

"What in the world are you doing in there, Mr. Jimson?" she inquired after locating him in the semi-darkness.

"The cows, widow; I started after them and forgot the slough in going cross lots."

"Wait, Mr. Jimson, and I will pull you out," and she made as if she

ward spring of the tree branch began to draw him up and out. Then, climbing hand over hand along the limb as it bent back to its normal position, the woman encouraging him all the way, he finally reached safety, and, dropping from the limb to the ground, broke his leg and fell unconscious.

When he recovered his senses he was lying on a couch in the widow's little parlor, the widow herself bending over him with a bowl of steaming tea which she made him drink.

"I must go home, widow," said Jimson trying to stand up and walk, but falling to the floor, groaning with pain. Lifting him back upon the couch, the widow bade him lie still while she went for the doctor.

"H-m-m, a very bad case," remarked the doctor after an examination of the fractured member. "Crushed, twisted and broken. How did it happen?"

When put in possession of the facts, the doctor burst out into a roar of laughter. "What a sight! What a sight!" he exclaimed as soon as he recovered his breath.

"What do you mean?" demanded the widow, bridling up.

"Why, your crawling out on that limb and crawling back again." The imaginative doctor again broke out into a fit of laughter, which was suddenly checked by a sound box on the ear administered by the angry woman.

"You're here to fix this poor man's leg, not to insult a woman!" she snapped out with fire in her eyes.

"Widow, I beg your pardon," said the doctor humbly as he turned to his patient.

"It will be six weeks before he can crawl about on crutches, and two months before he can attempt to walk," was the fiat when the operation had been completed.

"Six weeks? Two months?" groaned Jimson. "Let me go home. I must go home," and he attempted to rise, compelling the doctor to hold him down on his back.

"But the cow, widow, I must get the cow," said he plaintively.

"Never mind the cow, Mr. Jimson," said the widow; let it go to Halifax. You've got to lie still for six weeks or two months. I'll take care of you."

And she did take care of him, pulling him through until he was able to walk.

Not long afterward, about ten days before Thanksgiving day, the widow's little house was burned to the ground, all she had in the world being consumed with it. When the bucket brigade finished fighting the fiery demon, the latter had the best of it—there was nothing left but the widow—yes, there was the hencoop, but that was not a

"D'ye think we're going to let you live in a hencoop?"

At a town meeting, called for the purpose, it was resolved to have the widow's house rebuilt ready for occupation on Thanksgiving day. Some furnished money, others contributed materials, and others still volunteered to do the work.

There were delays and setbacks, however, as is usual whenever any work is promised at a certain, fixed time, so that when Thanksgiving morning arrived the problem of completing the job became knotty, but having been promised and undertaken, it had to be finished. By hard thinking Squire Hobbs conceived the idea, and to carry it into effect, he summoned his fellow townsmen and laid the matter before them.

"You women folks," said he by way of consulting them, "you women folks go home and cook up what you've got in the house just the same as if you were going to get dinner—Turkeys, chickens, geese, ducks, anything, and cranberry sauce. The pumpkin and mince pies are already ripe on the pantry shelves. Then bring everything here by 4 o'clock. We men will finish this house for the widow by that time, and we'll all eat our Thanksgiving dinner on the spot. It will be a house warming Thanksgiving dinner and an old-fashioned barn-raising combined. There'll be board tables laid outside for those who can't get inside the house. You boys and girls, get all the boxes and barrels you can find—there's a lot of cordwood in my back yard that won't be missed—and if we don't finish eating by dark, we'll have bonfires to see by and warm up up. Widow, you just sit or stand around and boss things, it being your house. No remarks, please! Scatter!"

The house was on hand at the hour named, so were the women and the combined Thanksgiving dinners.

Of course, the house was not big enough to accommodate all the merry crowd that wanted to get into it, but those who could not squeeze in gathered around it as close as they could to eat and hear the speeches of the notables, who practiced oratory until the small boys notified them that the fuel had given out. Then they all went home tired, but full and happy. Was the widow happy? Not a bit more than the others.

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he did see was the town messenger waving a telegram.

"For me?" asked Billy expectantly. "Now!" cried the boy. "It's for yer mother. Sign fer it."

Billy Dick laboriously signed his full name on the blank, and he and Flopsy ran in with the telegram. Mrs. Morton was busy in the dining room carefully packing a valise with Thanksgiving goodies, pies and cake and jellies.

"A telegram, mother," cried Billy Dick, "for you."

"Oh, Billy Dick!" was all she could say, for telegrams came so seldom that they always frightened her.

"It's—it's probably from Mrs. Walker," suggested Billy Dick in his reassuring manner. "Open it and see."

"Mrs. Walker is in Turkey," laughed Mrs. Norton at his comfort.

Billy Dick tore the envelope open and Mrs. Morton read the telegram aloud:

"On way East. Arrive Thanksgiving 10 a. m. John and Dorothy."

"Goodness!" cried Billy Dick. "Uncle Jack and Aunt Dot to visit us!" and he capered around the table.

"Yes, it is nice," said Mrs. Morton. "but, Billy Dick, they're to arrive Thanksgiving day, and that means our other plans are spoiled."

Billy Dick hadn't thought of that, that certainly wasn't pleasant, for the expedition they had planned was to go down to Norfolk, for the father, who was in the navy, was unable to leave the yard to come home for the holiday.

And such a cooking time as they had had, Capt. Morton had written that the food there was poor, and if they came down to bring some "frills," and it was the "frills" that Mrs. Morton was now packing in the bag.

"And—it busts our plans?" echoed Billy Dick. "O mother!"

"We must stay at home, Billy Dick, and disappoint your father, too," Mrs.

Posy and Flopsy and Miss Elsie, who was his Sunday school teacher and his very best girl, and the fun he and Flopsy had last year earning their Christmas from Mr. Minders. And the old gentleman laughed and enjoyed the jokes, and in turn told Billy Dick what he did years and years ago when he was a boy.

So the time passed away quickly, till word was brought to them that there had been a wreck on the road and that no train could run through to Norfolk that night.

"But I must go," said Billy Dick. "My father is waiting for me. I'll give them a dollar if they can let me through."

A dollar was a large sum to Billy Dick, and as it was all he had it was a valuable offer.

The colored waiter showed his teeth pleasantly. "Sho, dey ain't gwine lef eben de president troo," he said. "Sorry, sah."

Billy Dick looked frightened. "But—but," he said, "my father was to meet me and telegraph to mother that I got here all right, and mother'll be so worried. And father says it is cowardly to worry a lady."

"Well, well, it is too bad," said the old gentleman. "Your father won't worry because he knows I am here, and we'll telegraph to your mother if you like."

So Billy Dick ate the rest of the supper, convinced that a small boy couldn't do much to clear the railroad if they would not even do it for the president himself.

After the ice cream was finished, they went to the telegraph office and sent the telegram.

"Can you give mother my love?" asked Billy Dick.

The old gentleman chuckled and nodded.

Then there was nothing else to do



The Limb Bent Lower and Lower.

with even simple furnishings, took all her avails and compelled her to look around for the wherewith to satisfy the cravings and clamors of her physical nature, for she was a jolly and weighty specimen of widowkind. As the doctor frequently said of her:

"The widow Ames is a good-sized chunk of a woman; able to take care of herself and stand on her rights."

For some inscrutable reason the widow had set herself up as the champion of the weak—men, women or children, there was no difference to her—even in the case of a helpless bird or dog, she would ruffle up as if she had the feathers of a motherly hen guarding her brood from the attacks of a ravenous hawk, and stay the injurious hand. To the sick and suffering she was kindness personified, and her gentle disposition combined with her physical strength and the knowledge of how to use it brought her into constant demand as a skillful nurse. Everybody knew her, respected her and had reason to be grateful to her for services performed at some period or other, and was ready to fight for her if the occasion required war on her behalf.

There was once a faint breath of scandal, but the doctor dispated it in the most startlingly vigorous manner, and after that, neither it nor any other ill-wind blew in her direction.

"If that woman isn't a saint, she's next door to being one," was his wind-up when he told the story.

Mr. Adoniram Jimson was the individual in question. A "no-do well," but he took care of the widow's cow and calf, looked after her chickens and cucks as a labor of love, and to reciprocate many of her little surreptitious acts of kindness in the shape of fresh baked bread, an occasional roast chicken or a luxuriant pie, that found its way into his scant pantry. He accepted and ate everything he found there in a perfunctory manner, somewhat after the style of the ravened prophet, or rather like the hog under the oak, that roots up and devours the succulent nuts without ever looking up to see whence they come.

It so happened, late one evening, that Mr. Jimson started after the widow's cow and calf that had been wandering among the brush all day for pasture, and had apparently forgotten the way home. It had been raining steadily for forty-eight hours, and the numerous sloughs, riverbeds and buffalo wallows were so saturated with water that it meant death to fall into any of them because of the bottomless quicksands mixed with mirey

would go in after him, but he quickly stopped her.

"No, no, widow, for God's sake, go back. You'll mire yourself an' both of us'll be lost."

"I have it," said the widow, quickly taking in all the surroundings. "Have patience, Mr. Jimson, and do not struggle, or you will sink faster," then adding under her breath: "I must do it; there's no time to get help; besides, nobody can see me."

The big lower limb of a sycamore tree stretched out over and beyond him, but out of his reach, and her thought was, that if she could climb out on the limb, her weight would bend it down so that he could seize hold of it, and either draw himself out, or hold on to it until she could procure other aid.

She climbed the tree and reached the big limb after encountering numerous bruises and scratches, which, however, she did not heed. Then resting a moment, she stretched her body out along the branch and began to crawl slowly toward Jimson, who soon understood what she intended to do.

"Widow," he cried imploringly, "you'll fall off an' be lost. Never mind me, widow, I ain't of no account; I'm in my last hole, an' it's jest as well. For God's sake, widow, go back; don't risk your life for me!"

"Be still, poor man," said the woman, crawling slowly along, her arms and legs clasped around the limb. It began to bend with her weight at last, but she still kept on, almost falling off, for the limb was growing smaller and she could not grip it tight. She flattened her body down upon it like a worm crawling on a quivering twig, all the time telling Jimson to cheer up and she would save him. The limb bent lower and lower still, until Jimson had a tiny branch in his grasp.

"Now, hold on tight," the widow commanded, "and keep still. I am going back, and when my weight is off the limb it will spring up and pull you out."

So saying, she began to crawl backward cautiously, lest a single slip should throw her off her balance and her efforts prove in vain. The broken, jagged twigs and branches caught her dress and pierced her flesh, but with resistless force she bore her whole weight backward against them and tore herself free, reaching the trunk in safety, whence she dropped panting to the ground.

Jimson worked the sticky earth and sand into the consistency of gruel, by turning and twisting, until finally the downward suction ceased and the up-



Took Care of Him Until He Could Walk.

fit habitation for her, although she thought she might fix it up and get along all right until she could afford to build some sort of a shanty to protect her from the inclement weather. She refused all offers of aid, but Squire Hobbs laid down the law and she was compelled to yield.

"You will go over to my house and stay there until we have built you another house," said he with a determination that overcame her resistance.

You know what I did last year? An auto and I ran away together. And I remembered, of course, that a boy whose name is Milton Montgomery Norton can't disobey, so we—Jimmy Ann! What do you suppose is the matter?"

Flopsy's tail wagged knowingly, but he didn't answer. He was either jealous of this "Jimmy Ann," whom he had never seen, but to whom Billy Dick often talked in this way. What

Morton's sweet voice was trembling. Billy Dick could not stand it—he and Flopsy had to go out on the piazza to think it over.

"O, Flopsy, Flopsy," said Billy Dick, burying his head in Flopsy's ears. "I'm glad you don't know what Thanksgiving is like, and a visit to pops at the yard, for you can't be disappointed. I feel—Jimmy Ann, there's something the matter with my eyes, and I've got a kind of a pain somewhere in my stomach, I guess, and—"

The door opened and Mrs. Morton came briskly out. "I have it, Billy Dick, I have another plan. We mustn't disappoint your father entirely. You and the goodies shall go to Norfolk, while Rosy Posy and I stay at home and receive Uncle Jack and Aunt Dot. Could you go alone?"

Billy Dick began to grow tall. He felt on a level with his pretty mother's shoulder as he answered:

"Why, of course. That would be jolly, except for you and Rosy Posy."

So Billy Dick started that afternoon, with a dollar in his pocket, and his ticket carefully stowed away in an inside pocket. It was a three hours' journey, and he had to change cars twice.

As he stepped off the train a little old man with white hair and a jolly smile came up to him.

"Well, well, well," he said, "how you have grown! This is Billy, isn't it? Yes? Well, I declare—come right along with me. The train is late, and we'd better get some supper here."

Billy Dick wasn't quite sure who the old gentleman was, but as he seemed familiar with him, why of course it was all right. It would not be polite to ask him who he was, and a Morton is always polite, you know. Probably it was great-uncle Howell, whom he had seen years ago. Yes, it must be, thought Billy Dick, though he did not know that he lived in Richmond.

So the two went off together across the street and round the corner to a hotel.

Billy Dick had never been in a hotel before, and before he was half through supper he made up his mind that as soon as he was big enough he would persuade the family to come there—it was so nice to have hundreds of things to eat all written out so you might choose as many as you wanted.

The two sat there, the very old man and the little boy having the best of times. Billy Dick told the new-found great-uncle all about home and Rosy

but spend the night in Richmond with his new-found uncle, and such fun it was to stay at a hotel!

Early in the morning Billy Dick and his great-uncle took the train for Norfolk, and soon the engine was pulling into the station.

And—O, joy! there was Dad anxiously peering through the window for his boy. He had jumped on the train before it stopped and had Billy Dick in his arms.

In fact, Billy Dick forgot all about his new-found uncle, for his father was so glad to see him safe and sound. "I must telegraph your mother at once, Billy Dick," said his father. "She has been almost worried to death about you when I could not telegraph her that you had arrived."

"But great-uncle Howell telegraphed—didn't you?" asked Billy Dick, turning to the old gentleman, who was greeting some friends.

"Who?" asked Capt. Morton.

"Why," began Billy Dick, and as he noticed that his father didn't shake hands with the old gentleman, and that the old gentleman apparently didn't know his father, he introduced them.

"This is my father; don't you remember him?" he said.

"Your father?" exclaimed the old gentleman. "Your father is my nephew, William Walters."

There surely was some mistake somewhere, or was he dreaming?

"Aren't you Billy Walters, William Walton Walters?" asked the old gentleman.

"I am Milton Montgomery Morton, sir," said Billy Dick.

"You said your name was Billy," said the old man.

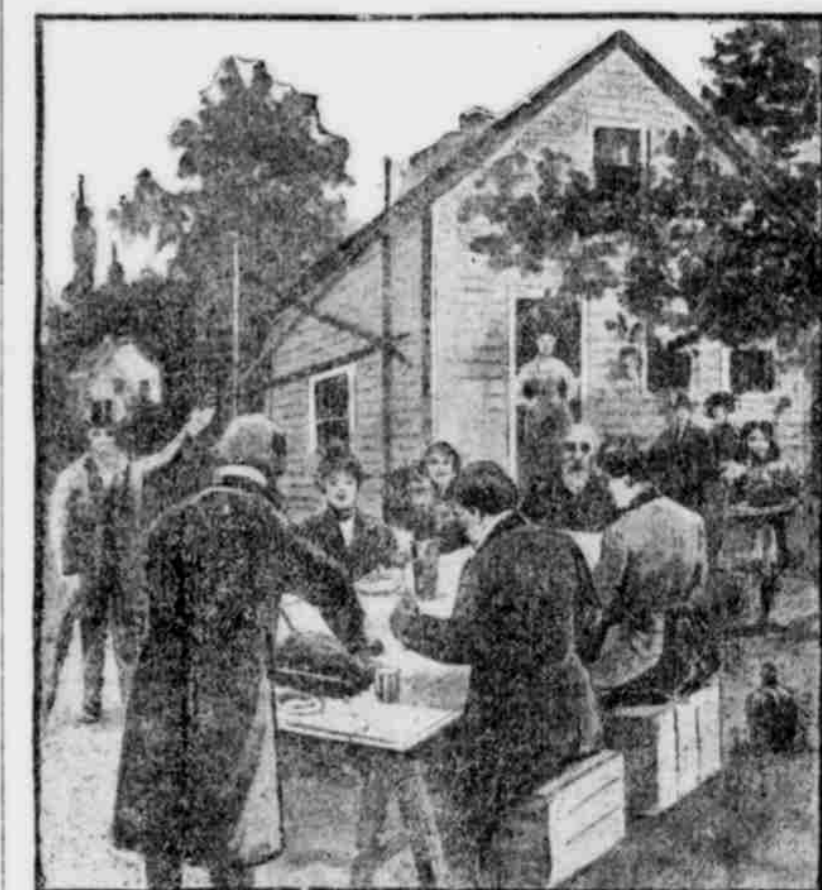
"Billy Dick," explained Capt. Morton. "He's always been called that because—"

Then the old gentleman began to laugh, and Billy Dick laughed, too, as did Captain Morton and the other friends that came up. And the whole thing was explained when one lady said: "Why, Billy Walters' mother telegraphed that he was sick and couldn't come."

"And—the telegram?" gasped Billy Dick.

"Went to Billy Walters' mother—with your love in it," laughed the old gentleman. "She must have been surprised to get it with her own Billy right at home!"

Billy Dick's own mother was notified at once, and his "great-uncle Howell" helped him and his father to eat the goodies she had packed in the bag.



An Outdoor Thanksgiving Dinner.